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UNCLAS HARARE 001770

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/S
USDOC FOR AMANDA HILLIGAS
TREASURY FOR OREN WYCHE-SHAW
PASS USTR FLORIZELLE LISER
STATE PASS USAID FOR MARJORIE COPSON

SENSITIVE

[1](#)E. O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: GOZ Deports COSATU Delegates

Sensitive but unclassified.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Local Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) officials have confirmed press reports that the GOZ deported thirteen visiting delegates from the Congress of South African Trade Unions this afternoon. ZCTU Vice President Lucia Matibenga said Zimbabwean immigration officials broke up a meeting between ZCTU and COSATU at 10:45 am. According to Matibenga, the immigration workers detained the South African trade unionists for several hours, explaining that they were awaiting a decision from the GOZ cabinet, which was holding its regular Tuesday morning meeting. Around midday, the immigration officials informed ZCTU leadership that cabinet had reached a decision to deport the thirteen delegates. Matibenga believes the delegates were put on a 3:00pm British Airways flight to Johannesburg.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Despite the GOZ's attempt to cancel COSATU's visit, the COSATU delegation entered Zimbabwe last night on a fact-finding mission. According to press reports, immigration authorities held the delegates in the airport for 1-2 hours before admitting them to the country. The South African labor body planned to meet representatives of both parties and civil society, in addition to holding meetings with ZCTU.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Comment: Having warned COSATU against coming in advance, the GOZ may have felt that deportation of the group was necessary to preserve its credibility. The Government may be especially loath to let domestic and foreign critics develop any momentum in the wake of opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai's acquittal on treason charges earlier this month. The move may backfire, though, if it stimulates a strong response from South African media and civil society that in turn heartens and emboldens domestic critics here or, equally important, encourages COSATU to put pressure on Mbeki to engage more actively on Zimbabwe. In any event, the truculent move underscores the ruling party's instinct for a defiant rather than an accommodating posture in response to attempts at outside intervention.

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